



SEVIS 6.27 Pre-Release Webinar FAQs (June 10, 2016)

July 1, 2016: Initial release of FAQs

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F/M Manage Initial Program and Session Dates

- Q: Why did the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) rename the Defer Attendance link?**
- A:** Many DSOs did not realize they could use the Defer Attendance link to change the Program Start Date to be earlier than the date in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The DSOs submitted many unnecessary correction requests for changes they could have quickly done themselves. The changed name allows the DSOs to issue revised Forms I-20 more quickly and decrease the number of correction requests submitted.
- Q: Can DSOs use the Manage Initial Program and Session Dates function for change of education level students?**
- A:** Yes.



Q: How does the Manage Initial Program and Session Dates function affect students with a pending change of status request?

A: The function works the same way as the previous Defer Program function did. DSOs must defer the Program Start Date for students with pending change of status *before* the Program Start Date listed in SEVIS. USCIS will not approve a change of status, if the record is not in Initial status.

Q: Can an Initial Session Start Date for an individual student ever be different from the start of the term or session for the school?

A: Yes, the dates can vary for a student. Examples of when an Initial Session Start Date for an individual student may differ from the official start of his or her term are:

- A student in H-4 status is studying at the school while waiting for USCIS to approve the change to F-1 status. The DSO must defer the Program Start Date and the Initial Session Start Date to keep the record in Initial status.
- An incoming student who has arranged with the school to arrive a week after the start of class.

Q: When can a student enter the United States? Is it 30 days before the Program Start Date or 30 days before the Initial Session Start Date?

A: A student may enter the United States 30 days before the Program Start Date.

Q: If a mandatory orientation is scheduled for August 10 and classes start on August 20, can August 10 be the Program Start Date?

A: Yes, and August 20 would be the Initial Session Start Date.

Q: If an application to change to F or M status is pending with USCIS and the program start date is near, how should DSOs manage the student's record in SEVIS?

A: DSOs should defer the start of the student's program. The record must be in Initial status until USCIS approves the change of status. Also, SEVIS will cancel records in Initial status 60 days after the Program Start Date.

Q: If the Program Start Date and the Initial Session Start Date are both 08/01/2016, can a DSO defer a student's program on 08/06/2016, if the student tells the DSO he or she cannot begin the program that term?

A: Yes, SEVIS will still allow DSOs to defer a student's program after the term has started.

F/M Program Start Date versus Initial Session Start Date

Q: Can the Program Start Date be earlier than today's date, if you are changing it for a student in Initial status?

A: No.

Q: Student's actual first day of class may be different. What date should DSOs use as the first day of class?



A: DSOs should use the official start date of the term at the school. Do not tie the Initial Session Start Date to the actual first day of class for the individual student.

Q Does the Initial Session Start Date apply to students who are changing their status?

A: Yes, the Initial Session Start Date applies whenever a DSO issues a Form I-20 for a student to:

- Begin a new program of study.
- Transfer in to the school.
- Change educational level.
- Apply for reinstatement.

Q: When recommending a reinstatement, what date should the DSO use for the Initial Session Start Date?

A: Use the start of classes for the next available term.

Q: Is the 30-day registration deadline tied to the Program Start Date or to the Initial Session Start Date?

A: The 30-day registration deadline is tied to the Initial Session Start Date.

Q: Is the SEVIS auto-termination function tied to the Program Start Date or to the Initial Session Start Date?

A: SEVIS will terminate a student based on the Program Start Date.

NOTE: DSOs will have the full reporting period to complete their registration.

Q: Why is the Alert List for students requiring Initial Registration tied to the Initial Session Start Date?

A: The Alert List is tied to Initial Session Start Date to be consistent with regulation.

Q: Is the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) aware of the Initial Session Start Date and how that may affect entry?

A: SEVP passes the information to the CBP, but the Initial Session Start Date should not affect entry. The Form I-20 has a do not enter before date printed on it, which should guide CBP's decision to admit students.

Q: Does a DSO need to reissue the Form I-20 for a new student who has a Form I-20 that does not have an Initial Session Start Date on it?

A: No.

Q: How do the Initial Session Start Date and the Program Start Date appear on the Form I-20?

A: The Form I-20 has the following fields:

- Program Start/End Date – Displays the Program Start and End Dates.
- Start of Classes – Reflects the Initial Session Start Date.



- **Earliest Admission Date** – Reports the earliest date the student can enter the United States, which is 30 days before the Program Start Date.

These changes are partly to make this information clearer for the student.

Batch Schools

Q: For a batch school, will all records be required to have a Program Start Date and an Initial Session Start Date?

A: Yes, with SEVIS Release 6.27, SEVIS will require both a Program Start Date and an Initial Session Start Date when creating a Certificate of Eligibility in batch.

If you have already created a record, SEVIS will automatically make the Initial Session Start Date the same as the Program Start Date. You do not have to resubmit that information.

Travel, Passport, and Visa Information

Q: Can schools submit travel, passport, and visa information via batch processing?

A: No, schools cannot submit this information via batch.

Student Contact Information

Q: What will SEVP and the Department of State do with nonimmigrant email addresses?

A: For SEVP, email addresses will become more important. SEVP will use student email addresses to communicate with students about I-901 SEVIS Fee payments.

Q: How will international students be able to differentiate legitimate calls from U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from scams that claim to be government officials?

A: SEVP is very much aware of the scams targeting international students. SEVP will not request payment of any sort from a student other than the I-901 SEVIS Fee. The student will be directed to the I-901 SEVIS Fee website for payment.

Students should never:

- Pay any SEVIS-related fees on any site other than fmjfee.com. Students can call their DSO to confirm whether they owe the fee. SEVIS will display an indicator on the *SEVIS Information* page. Students can call and deal with SEVP directly, if needed.
- Believe anyone who says they cannot hang up and call their DSO for additional help. The students will not be arrested for hanging up on a caller that claims to be law enforcement.



Q: For newly-arrived students, can we enter the school address as their U.S. Physical Address until they have found a place to live?

A: There is no change in SEVP policy on this. The DSO can provide the address where the student is staying, whether it is a hotel or the address of a friend or relative.

Q: Are DSOs required to keep student email addresses up to date? For example, if a DSO learns that an email address is no longer valid, is he required to update it?

A: SEVP has not yet determined the requirements for updating email addresses. At this time, SEVIS does not validate email addresses. If a DSO is aware of a new valid email address, he/she should report it in SEVIS.

Q: Should the email address be the students personal email address or can it be the school-assigned email address?

A: It can be either one.

Students Exempt from Reporting of Telephone and Email Information

Q: Since email and telephone information is not required for K-12 students, are high school students over 18 years old also exempt?

A: Yes, any student enrolled in a K-12 school is exempt for this requirement.

Q: Even though K-12 schools are not required to enter telephone and email information, should they be entered into SEVIS anyway?

A: No, do not enter this information in SEVIS. SEVP seeks to comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which requires parental consent to provide this information for some students. It is best to not provide it.

Q: Why is the cut-off age for reporting telephone and email information on M-1 students set at 14 years old?

A: It is much harder to tell if an M-student is in a K-12 program, or if he or she is participating in a program open to people of varied ages.

Registration

Q: If a student enrolls in summer school, must the DSO report enrollment?

A: This release does not change any guidance on reporting enrollments. You have always had to choose between two different ways of handling this:

- Reporting the student's enrollment in the summer session.
- Treating this as a discretionary summer activity.

Q: Can a student show up at the school 30-60 days after the regulatory reporting deadline?

A: No, the student must still report to the school as usual. DSOs have the additional time to update SEVIS to report the student's arrival.



Q: Why is the Initial Students Requiring Registration Alert List tied to the Initial Session Start Date, instead of the Program Start Date?

A: The alert is tied to the Initial Session Start Date to be more consistent with regulations that link reporting in SEVIS to registration for classes.

Q: Will there be a list of all possible reasons why SEVIS registration would fail?

A: For schools using batch, the application programming interface (API) document lists error messages returned when an event fails in batch.

For schools using the Mass Registration function, SEVIS will provide a report on Mass Registration results. It will be available on the *SEVIS Downloads* page. This report will indicate why specific student records failed to register.

Registration at K-12 Schools

Q: Why must K-12 schools report student registration twice a year? These schools typically only register in the fall.

A: SEVP understands that schools have a formal process called registration, in which the students sign up for specific classes. SEVIS uses the term “registration” differently.

In SEVIS, “registration” refers to the DSO’s regulatory requirement to report the student’s enrollment in the academic program at the start of each term, session, semester, or quarter. SEVIS registration confirms that the student is a full-time student at the school. SEVP needs the DSOs to report a student’s continued enrollment at the start of each term, because many things can happen after the DSO reports enrollment at the start of the year. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A student may leave the United States to spend the winter break with family and be unable to return.
- A student may be dismissed from a school.

Q: K-12 schools have traditionally registered students for the whole academic year. Now it seems SEVP requires DSOs are to report enrollment twice a year. Clearly, the first day of the academic year is the session start date for the first term. What would be the start date for the second term, assuming the school is semester-based?

A: The second semester typically begins after the winter break.

Q: Can schools have session dates in SEVIS that are longer than 183 calendar days?

A: Yes, schools can certainly have terms longer than 183 days, but SEVIS will require DSO confirmation of those dates.

Reduced Course Load

Q: Can DSOs see reduced course load information for students who transfer from other schools?



- A: No, DSOs cannot see any information for reduced course loads authorized by other schools. SEVP has no current plans to change what DSOs can see for a transfer student. Whether a student is eligible for a reduced course load depends on how one reads the regulations and if the student is beginning a new program. For further guidance, call the SEVIS Help Desk (1-800-892-4829).

Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status

Q: Can a designated school official (DSO) issue a Form I-20 six months before the program starts?

A: Yes, there is not any problem with issuing a Form I-20 well in advance of the program start dates. It can take some time for a student to get a visa, or even a passport, and to prepare for study in the United States. This release does not change any existing requirements.

Form I-20 Replacement Deadline

Q: The report of students who need a new Form I-20 appears to be incorrect. Students for whom DSOs have issued Forms I-20 for optional practical training appear on the list.

A: The list is flawed. It only includes students for whom Forms I-20s were reprinted using either the regular reprint or the mass reprint functions. SEVIS does not recognize the printing of updated Forms I-20 – such as, those following an OPT recommendation – to be reprints. As a result, SEVIS does not record these as reprints.

Q: Will continuing students be refused entry to the United States, if they do not have an updated Form I-20; or will they be given a Form I-515?

A: That will be a decision made by CBP.

J SEVIS

Q: The expansion of the Residential Address Information field will affect the Secondary School Student category. Must the responsible officer (RO) or alternate responsible officer (ARO) enter the host family's address in both the Contact Information and the Residential Address sections and indicate whether the placement is an arrival or permanent, at the time of validation in SEVIS. It is unclear whether we must start batching BOTH the host family and local coordinator information?

A: No, the host family's address must be entered on the *Contact and Program Information* page in the Physical Address field. The *Residential Address* page has new fields to collect (but the address is only on one page):

- Local coordinator information.
- Residential address type – boarding school or host family.



- Host family information:
 - Whether the placement is arrival or permanent placement.
 - Primary contact and secondary contact information.
 - Host family contact telephone number.
- Boarding School Information:
 - Primary contact information.
 - Boarding school name and phone number.

This information is not required until validation. All residential information can be sent via batch processing. The April 15 Webinar on J-1 Certificates of Eligibility provides more detail.

Q: What should ROs/AROs do if the Program End Date and the Transfer Release Date for a J-1 transfer exchange visitor is July 8 – 10, 2016, which is the same day as the SEVIS 6.27 Release?

A: SEVIS Release 6.27 will deploy at 8 PM (ET). ROs/AROs have the following options to process transfers:

- Work with the transfer-out organization to see if they can extend the Program End Date a few days to bridge the weekend, so the transfer-in organization can process the transfer without a data fix.
- Process the transfer and extend the program as usual before 5 PM (ET) on July 8, 2016.
- Call the SEVIS Help Desk for a data fix.

Q: When a student transitions or moves, must the RO/ARO update the information and also indicate if it is temporary or permanent, as with the initial validation?

A: The fields were put into SEVIS to allow TO/AROs to update the information. The Office of Designation has been asked to provide guidance on whether AROs are expected to update this information after the initial validation of an exchange visitor.

Form I-17 Improvements

Q: Should schools wait until the new Form I-17 is released before making updates to their Form I-17 or before adding officials?

A: No, do not wait to update your Form I-17.

Suggested Improvements

Q: Are there any resources to guide newly approved K-12 schools?

A: No, we do not have any specific K-12 materials at this time. SEVP plans to develop materials specific for the K-12 schools, when time permits with our limited resources. All schools, including newly approved schools, will also be contacted by the SEVP Field Representative assigned to that school.



Q: Will SEVP consider allowing schools to see information on any reduced course loads granted a student by another school?

A: No, authorizations for reduced course loads are program specific.

Q: Can SEVP add nonimmigrant email address as an additional field that exports when an alert or list is exported?

A: In J SEVIS, responsible officers (ROs) and AROs will see additional fields in the Alerts/Lists export functionality.

SEVP will consider this suggestion for a future improvement to F/M SEVIS. Submit suggestions for additional fields to SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov.